

Three January match reports for Epsom and Ewell FC

5 February 2024

Between 16th and 30th January **Nathan Lambert** took up the Epsom and Ewell FC match reporting responsibilities of his father Richard. Here are his three reports for your pleasure and the archives. Well done Nathan. Good job.

Epsom & Ewell 2-4 Virginia Water. Southern Combination Cup - Second Round. Tuesday 16th January 2024. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk. Reporter: Nathan Lambert

Salts frozen out by Water

On a cold evening at the Reg Madgwick stadium in Cobham, Virginia Water visited us for a Southern Combination Cup tie. The match started off well with a few good chances for both teams as in the sixth minute, Lewis Pearch was set free down the left wing and his ball into the box was headed narrowly wide by Jaan Stanley. From the resulting goal kick, Water went down the other end and put a shot from 15 yards high and wide to the right.

A few minutes later, Thompson Adeyemi ran through the opposition defence and squared a ball across for the shot to be lashed narrowly over the bar from just outside the box. Once again Virginia Water went up the other end and put a ball across the face of the goal from the left-hand side that no one could capitalize on.

After 20 minutes, both sides had decent chances and both could have scored, but it was us that took the lead in the 25th minute when a deep ball from defence found Luke Miller who got in behind the defence through the use of a nice one-two with Tijani Eshilokun. Miller finished this chance off with a great finish at the near post.

It was all downhill from here unfortunately with not much happening between this point and half time, apart from us conceding in the 44th minute with Brandon Jackson who scored for the visitors with a clinical finish into the bottom right corner.

At half time we seemed to be worth the draw but that would not stay the same into the second half as in the 52nd minute, a ball across from the left was poked into the net by Casey Boccaro from about 12 yards out. A few minutes later we made a double substitution to try and switch things up. We brought Carl Oblitey and Sirak Negassi on for Jaan Stanley and Lewis Pearch.

Debutant Oblitey, with an almost instant impact, was put through on goal by Rory Edwards after he ran through a couple of defenders and put his shot just over the bar. However soon after this we went out of the match entirely, conceding soon after from a free kick which was originally saved, but the rebound was tapped in from close range in the 72nd minute.

Ten minutes later a great back-post ball from the right wing was finished back across the goal into the far bottom corner and the visitors did not let off the pressure having two more goals ruled out for offside where balls in behind were slightly mistimed. This was not the end of the action however as substitute Sirak Negassi found himself in possession of the ball after a sliced defensive clearance to curl the ball over the keeper into the top right corner in the 90th minute.

In conclusion this was a fairly poor performance all round, as we were too open at the back, not holding the ball in midfield and we weren't creative enough in the final third but, at the end of the day it was a cup match and our main focus has to be staying up in the league this year.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Ethan Brazier, Tommy Williams, Rory Edwards, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Carl Oblitey for Pearch (63), Sirak Negassi for Stanley (63), Jerry Antwi for Williams (80)

Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Cobham. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Friday 26th January 2024

Landlords leave it late on Friday night

Subsequent to this disappointing injury-time loss to Cobham, the threat of relegation looms large as we are six points beneath Guildford and only three ahead of Sheerwater and four ahead of Colliers Wood United. I certainly think that we need to have an improvement in form soon or we may well be headed back into step Six and possibly back to Sussex, which would be unfortunate after the work we put in to get promoted last season.

Toby Colwell came in for a rare match between the posts as Harvey Keogh was away for a few days and we started off strongly in the 4th minute where a ball in found its way to the back post where it was poked over the line following a goal-mouth scramble. Unfortunately, it was disallowed for a foul against the Cobham goalkeeper which was probably fair. Two minutes later we had another good chance after Nick Wilson found himself in some space on the edge of the box, but he drilled his shot wide.

The next piece of action at either end came in the 14th minute as Luke Miller received the ball just outside the box and put us ahead with a low, curling shot that was reached by the keeper, but not kept out. At this point I was thinking back to the last match we had played against Virginia Water, where we had gone 1-0 up fairly early with a Miller goal but had let it slip by conceding four from that point. However, this looked different as there was limited action for much of the remainder of the first half with a few saves at each end, most notably in the 34th, with a great low save by Toby Colwell

that went out for a corner that led to nothing.

Three minutes later our new signing (as of last week) Carl Oblitey had a shot from roughly 20 yards that went slightly over the bar. It seemed like we were playing the better football as we were approaching half time with one Cobham chance in the 44th minute that flew over the bar from 15 yards.

At the half we probably deserved the lead. In the 51st minute, Cobham got a player through onto a one on one with our keeper that was well saved by Colwell with the follow up being blocked as well. Soon after we had a free kick that was crossed to the back post and headed narrowly wide.

Nothing much else happened for 15 minutes except for Cobham seeming to be more in control of possession. This however, would count for nothing if they couldn't create chances whilst they had most of the momentum. Unfortunately for us, they did take advantage of this period of good play with a goal in the 75th minute where a shot from Reis Stanislaus found its way across goal to Ryan Marklew who bundled it in.

At this point I could tell that it would be a matter of "when" rather than "if" as we were losing focus, losing control and we couldn't string many passes together. We tried to make a couple of substitutions to change our fortune, but Cobham piled on the pressure after a few quick restarts and got chance after chance.

A brilliant opportunity opened up for Ryan Holt in the 92nd minute as our defence didn't close him down and he was able to get his shot off to swerve which led to a corner. The corner was only half cleared and this would cost us as the ball was returned to the back post where Marklew got himself his and Cobham's second when they needed it most - three minutes over the normal time

Although there were another eight minutes after the goal for us to score in, it seemed that we were trying to punt the ball long and win the header to score but it didn't work and the game finished 2-1. I felt we were unlucky to lose but it still leaves us in a bad position, particularly if results elsewhere go badly.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Tommy Williams, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Nick Inwugwu, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Jaan Stanley for Oblitey (65), Sirak Negassi for Eshilokun (80), Ethan Brazier for Williams (87)

Epsom & Ewell 1-2 Jersey Bulls. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Tuesday 30th January 2024

A late loss, again

Our fifth home match in a row provided us with a fourth consecutive loss on Tuesday as we lost in the final minutes against Jersey Bulls. Although it was a narrow loss and late in the match it still leaves us without a point for 2024 so far; form that can't continue if we want to stay up this season.

Our opponents came straight out of the gates at kick-off, putting us under some early pressure which we couldn't escape from. It took them just nine minutes to score with a fantastic ball into the box from near the touchline that was poked in from close range by Lorne Bickley. This was not the end of their pressure however as for the next 15 minutes we didn't get many chances at all whereas they kept on putting good balls into the box which were either missed, saved or blocked.

At this point in the half we were lucky not to be further behind, but the price of weathering the storm was just the one goal. We were starting to get a couple of chances at goal and in the 30th minute, Carl Oblitey headed a long ball down to Tijani Eshilokun who returned it to him for a shot towards goal. This shot looped up in the air, over the keeper and back into the box off the frame of the goal where Oblitey finished it back across goal at the second attempt, low to the keeper's left to make it 1-1.

It was only a few minutes later when Jersey had another chance. Their forward got through on goal but the ball bobbed away from him and he landed on the ground apparently due to a shirt pull from a defender, but the referee didn't give a pen for it.

The first half finished with two chances from Jersey, one was put over into the stand at that end and the second chance was a cross that went across the face of goal that no one could get to. At the half, we were lucky not to be behind after Jersey's early pressure, but the score was one apiece at the half.

Early into the second half, we showed a bit of bright attacking play where Luke Miller got down the right wing and put a ball across but no one was far enough upfield to capitalise and give us the lead. There was very little attacking threat from Jersey for the next 15 and even less from us as the game quietened down. However Jersey then found a second wind and was pushing forward from about the 70th minute onwards.

I was surprised that we hadn't made any substitutions by this point as we weren't looking great up top, but we waited until the 86th minute to make replacements as Jaan Stanley and Sirak Negassi came on for Lewis Pearch and Eshilokun to try and create new ideas in attack. However, three minutes later, a penalty was awarded to Jersey for an apparent handball that our defenders were certain did not hit an arm. Nevertheless, the penalty was clinically converted by Bickley into Colwell's top left corner to make it 2-1 to the visitors.

Three minutes into added time we had the final chance of the match with a free kick from about 20 yards out. Nick Wilson lined up to take it but it was parried by the keeper and the rebound was gathered. It is probably worth noting that the wall did not look like it was six yards back, let alone ten but it is not the reason we ultimately lost this match. We should have created a few more chances ourselves. At the end of the day, we could have lost the match far before that point and it still leaves us with four losses out of four for January.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Nick Inwugwu, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson (c), Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Carl Oblitey, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch

Subs: Jaan Stanley for Pearch (86), Sirak Negassi for Eshilokun (86)